



Defense White Papers in the Americas: A Comparative Analysis¹

Executive Summary

In preparation for the October 2000 Defense Ministerial of the Americas (DMA) in Manaus Brazil and at the request of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) studied the global trend toward the creation of Defense White Papers. The study aimed to understand the nature of these documents in order to prepare the U.S. delegation to discuss the tendency in Latin America and the Caribbean during the DMA. The INSS study team found no agreement about what constitutes a 'white paper' other than each is a consensus statement on a topic. The team examined 15 defense documents worldwide and interviewed participants in the development process and independent analysts. The results suggest that the formative, often difficult, process through which governments must move to solidify their approach to national security defense policy, and the structure to implement it and build consensus for it is the essential part of a 'white paper,' providing a constructive experience that benefits the country. Governments tended not to want a template for this process, although at the working level there is some interest in the experience of other states. Defense White Papers become highly stylized nationalistic documents that reflect a state's unique domestic circumstances and international geopolitical situation. The attached chart provides an overview comparison of the Defense White Paper processes of Canada, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and South Africa. Past efforts by U.S. agencies to design templates have failed.

Background

The recent trend toward an increased awareness and use of "white papers" in the international community is increasingly apparent in democratizing states. The term appears to have originated with the British Government's practice of using it to signify a policy paper that is the consensus of participating agencies or ministries. Beyond the British experience there is no general agreement on a definition. Many new national governments have found "defense white papers" and the consensus-building process used to produce them particularly helpful for demonstrating civilian expertise and leadership in the politically sensitive area of national security. These normally unclassified (transparent) documents play an important role in forging internal agreement within the executive branch and external accord with the national legislature and key sectors of society on national defense policy and resource priorities that match

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the country's domestic realities at a particular point in time. The white papers also help in explaining the policy consensus to the national electorate.

An INSS study team examined 15 Defense White Papers from around the world and interviewed individuals who either participated in or were close to a developmental process. The team found most of the documents to be uniquely national statements of a security or defense concepts at a particular point in time and for specific reasons. The tone and the depth of the information presented vary considerably. Most states agree that they are meant to be dynamic documents that can change, at least in part, with a change in administration. The difficult challenge of continuing to produce a general national agreement, however, results in papers that are not often nor easily modified. The team's analysis identified four useful areas for comparisons that provide insight into this security phenomenon and highlight the flexibility that exists in creating one. The points of comparison include:

- The catalyst for the paper's development.
- The nature of the ensuing developmental process.
- The concept of national security and the nature of defense policy guidance embodied in the paper.
- The format used to present the white paper.

Points of Comparison

Catalysts for Development

The INSS team's analysis found three different catalysts for creating a Defense White Paper. The creative impulse originates either in the executive branch or the national legislature, or it can originate with an external political imperative, such as a requirement for membership in an international organization. We also determined that the nature of the catalyst usually establishes several parameters for the document. It often shapes the approach followed in drafting the white paper as well as influence its substance, tone, and ultimate format. The experience of Eastern European Partnership for Peace states provides an example of the third type of catalyst. NATO set requirements that dictated to these governments their document's ultimate structure, a great deal of the content, and its tone. In Latin America, the general tendency to date has been for the executive to initiate the effort and define the process. However, in 1996 the Argentine legislature played the role of catalyst, but it did not prescribe the process.

Developmental Process

In the 15 cases examined the process to produce a Defense White Paper took one of three forms. After an initial period of research, the first option is for one agency, usually the Ministry of Defense, to draft the document with working level consultation outside the ministry, and then present the proposal for approval to the national catalyst for the project, either the president or the legislature. In the second option, the president

establishes an inter-governmental working group and directs it to develop the paper. The leader of the working group may come from the President's staff, the Foreign Ministry, or the Ministry of Defense. The number of participating agencies can vary. The aim of this approach is to build consensus within the executive branch before submitting the product to the president for review and then ultimately to the legislature for approval. In the third alternative, the composition of the working group (or groups) and consensus-building approach is broadened beyond the government to include external experts, such as academic specialists, representatives from non-governmental organizations and leaders from the private sector. This process has been used successfully in South Africa, Canada and Chile.

The basis for selecting one of these forms appears to depend on the degree to which national security is a domestic political issue of immediate concern. In the cases examined, a high degree of public interest suggests the greatest need for broad consensus building.

Concept of National Security

At the heart of a Defense White Paper is the government's concept of national security. This tends to follow one of two approaches to national security affairs. Many of the countries examined adopted a largely state-centric perspective. In this case, national security is linked to issues of relative power, alliances, and the imperative to counter threats to sovereignty. This concept focuses on external threats to the physical integrity of the country, which usually includes a maritime economic exclusion zone (normally 200nm from the coastline). The second approach places less emphasis on physical security (although it remains a factor) and focuses on domestic political, economic, social and environmental concerns. In Latin American White Papers, governments have tended to emphasize a traditional conservative view of national security and identified with the first approach. On the other hand, South Africa and Canada are examples of states less focused on external threats. They have taken the domestic oriented approach to their Defense White Papers. Rarely addressed are threats of a non-traditional transnational variety that require serious coalition building with neighboring countries.

Structure of Presentation

The team found two distinct structural approaches to presenting Defense White Papers. The first, and most common, is a single document that lays out national political and strategic direction for security affairs. This guidance is then translated into three parts: a presentation of military roles in society, specific missions for the armed forces, and finally the comprehensive mid-to-long range planning on such issues as defense posture, force design, force levels, equipment modernization and funding. The second format utilizes more than one document. There is a paper that provides a national security concept, overall defense priorities and specific policy guidance, and one or more companion documents that address defense planning and budgetary issues. This approach offers greater flexibility in adapting the

implementation of national defense policy to a dynamic and changing environment without having to reestablish a policy consensus just to update the guidance document. Both approaches to structuring Defense White Papers can work effectively. The second reflects a national approach that over time has been institutionalized to cope with changing domestic priorities and international security concerns. The Government of Chile, which has one document, is expected to publish its second Defense White Book in 2002.

Western Hemisphere Experience

Canada (1994)

In response to the Prime Minister's directive to reassess security issues facing Canada, the government adopted a two-tiered multi-agency process that has been the most wide-ranging used in the Western Hemisphere. The Prime Minister established a Special Joint Committee that consulted ordinary citizens, defense experts, disarmament advocates, non-governmental organizations, Canadian allies, as well as the parliament in developing a national security concept. The Defense White Paper process, led by the Minister of National Defense, incorporated the recommendations of the Special Joint Committee and involved other government Ministries, as well as defense civilian and military leaders. The overall process resulted in a single document that addressed the national security concept, the intricacies of defense policy and doctrine, and military resource issues. The concept of national security was broadly defined to include transnational threats to Canadian security as well as a range of domestic concerns. External threats to the security of the state were of minimal concern.

The Canadian document includes the following topics:

- The international security situation.
- Domestic security issues and considerations.
- Combat capable forces.
- The defense of Canada.
- Canadian-US defense cooperation.
- The role of Canada in international security.
- The implementation of defense policy (includes a detailed discussion on managing resource requirements of the individual branches of the military).

Chile (1996; the process to develop a second iteration began in 2001)

Chile was the first Latin American country to produce a defense white paper. A presidential desire to present a national consensus on defense doctrine that was easily understood by the population at large was the principal impulse for producing a "White Book on Defense." The Ministry of Defense led an exhaustive process that included participation by representatives of other government agencies, select

academic and non-governmental experts and leaders from the private sector. It took two years to complete the process. The product was a single document that set forth a national security concept and defense doctrine. The White Book focused specifically on external threats to the physical integrity of Chile. In addition to ensuring a consensus on the essential elements of the Chilean defense doctrine, the developmental process ultimately drove agreements on defense policy, resource allocation and funding. The major components of the Chilean White Book include:

- The geo-political situation confronting Chile.
- Chile's national security concept.
- The defense priorities and interests of Chile.
- An outline of the Chilean military structure, including a discussion of civilian/military relations and roles of the military.
- Economic factors in the defense of Chile, including a discussion of the budgeting process.

Brazil (1996)

In the absence of a Ministry of Defense (established in 1998) and at the direction of President Cardoso, a political-military committee from the executive branch, in consultation with other agencies, ministries and non-governmental experts, led the process to develop a national security document. Unlike the Chileans and Argentines, the Brazilians adopted the multi document organizational approach to the structure of the Defense White Paper. They created a short document that presented the overarching national security interests of the country and general guidance for security issues. Specific elements of national defense planning can be found in separate presentations within the annual budgetary process. The Brazilian budgetary process requires the military to submit for Congressional approval, via the president, information about military planning, organization and resource allocation. The Brazilians, like their South American neighbors, took a conservative view of national security, primarily focusing on issues of external threat. Brazil's policy paper succinctly addresses:

- The international security situation.
- The national security priorities and Brazilian objectives of national defense.
- Strategic guidance.
- Specific directives.

Argentina (1998)

The Argentine Congress initiated the process leading to a Defense White Paper. The legislature desired a document that provided a plan to implement defense laws and policies already approved by congress. The Ministry of Defense prepared the Defense White Paper. Prior to congressional approval, non-governmental experts, including

academicians and representatives from influential “think tanks”, vetted the product. The process involved fewer participants than in Chile; however, it still provided important opportunities for consensus building within the government. The Argentines also took a narrow view of national security, limiting the scope to issues of external threat. Argentina, like Chile, created a single expansive document that includes in-depth discussion of the following topics:

- Geo-political overview of international and regional security issues.
- National security interests and defense policies.
- The roles and missions of the military.
- The structure of the military, including the joint staff and the services.
- Equipment and personnel resources available to the military.
- Financial resources, including the defense budget.

United States

The United States, by law, produces two annual documents that together are the equivalent of a Defense White Paper. Since the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the White House annually publishes its national security strategy, which presents worldwide national interests, goals and objectives that are vital to the security of the United States and a broad strategic framework to realize them over time. This relatively short document articulates a concept of national security that proposes short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military and other elements of national power to protect or promote its interests and achieve its goals and objectives. The national security strategy report addresses both state-centric and transnational issues. The second document, which also is required annually by the law governing the organization and operation of the Defense Department, is the Secretary’s “Annual Report to the President and the Congress.” This part of the ‘white paper’ has to accomplish two tasks. The first is to report on the condition and readiness of today’s armed forces. By law, this must be done by the Secretary of Defense, each Service Secretary, and the Chairman of the reserve Forces Policy Board. The second task is to present a defense strategy derived from the White House strategy report, the military requirements of the defense strategy, mid-to-long range defense planning guidelines, and the Department’s annual budget request. These documents often change. The main focus in 2002 is on transforming the Department of Defense and the U.S. Armed Forces for the demanding realities of the 21st Century. Parallel to the U.S. approach to Defense White Papers, the Department of State prepares a similar annual report on U.S. foreign policy and operations worldwide. The formative processes used by the United States are institutionalized. This facilitates changing the thrust of documents when required by domestic and international circumstances.

Other Latin American Countries

Uruguay, El Salvador and Guatemala have initiated their processes to prepare a defense white paper and are reviewing their current defense doctrines and policies. Each state is at a different stage of drafting, vetting, and editing.

Conclusion

The INSS study team concluded that there are no universal templates for the preparation of defense white papers. While a few points of comparison exist, national idiosyncrasies and governmental desires preclude the establishment of a single comprehensive approach. At the working level, governments do look at documents produced by other states primarily for ideas about document organization and occasionally substance. But foremost, the study shows that *a defense white paper's most important contribution to a country is the process that a government chooses to follow in producing it. There is great benefit to be gained from the initial national and international research, the development of a national security concept and defense policy guidance, the trade offs in setting policy and priorities, and the consensus building among civilian and military participants that takes place in the process.* Ideally, governments will institutionalize this dynamic process to facilitate adapting national security and defense to changing realities in international and domestic threat environments.

Attachment: Organizational Overview

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Organizational Overview

Country	Catalyst for Development	Developmental Process	Legislative Approval of White Paper	Concept of National Security	Structure of Presentation	Has the White Paper changed?	Is the White Paper an Operational Guide for the Budget?
Canada (1994)	Executive Directive	Ministry of Defense led expanded working groups	Yes	Domestic / Human Focus	1 document	No	Hard to define causal linkage.
Chile (1996)	Executive Directive	Ministry of Defense led expanded working groups	Yes	State Centric	1 document	Currently under consideration	Hard to define causal linkage.
Brazil (1996)	Executive Directive	Executive led expanded working groups	No approval for strategy. Legislature controls budget	State Centric	Multi-document	No	Defense strategy and operational guidance is incorporated into the budget process.
Argentina (1998)	Legislative Directive	Ministry of Defense Document	Yes	State Centric	1 document	No	Hard to define causal linkage.
United States (annual)	Legal Requirement	National Security Strategy: NSC led Interagency working group Annual Report: DoD document	No formal approval for strategy. Legislature controls budget.	State Centric	2 documents	Yes, annually.	Annual Report to Congress and President provides high level budgetary overview and planning guidance.
South Africa (1996)	Executive Directive	Ministry led expanded working groups	Yes	Domestic / Human focus	2 documents	No	Second document provides budgetary guidance.

